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THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL Government Education Film?

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WHILE looking through the DVD section at the local Walmart, I recently found a copy of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) bearing a production documentary and a commentary by Robert Wise, the film's director. While I already had a videotape, I confess I am a sucker for commentary tracks and was able to persuade myself that I had to have this. While listening to Wise reminisce about the problems of making the film, he mentioned that the army equipment in the film was not provided by the real army. He had to send the military a copy of the script and they decided they wanted no part of it. Someone on the staff of Twentieth Century Fox was able to get the equipment from a nearby National Guard facility outside of Washington, D.C. Though Wise wasn't formally told why his request was rejected, he felt somebody upstairs didn't like the message of the film.

That seems easy to understand. Early in the film, a benevolent-looking alien is shot down by one of the military by accident - not exactly a testament to good training or restraint. The film is also a thinly disguised advertisement for the United Nations. Conservatives in the military were not supportive of the idea of the United Nations. It smacked of world government and threatened intrusive oversight.

Reminded about this, I thought back to claims by some UFO authors that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was intended as a tool by the government to prepare the public for the shocks forthcoming from the coming of aliens to our world. Does this refusal to provide a few tanks and jeeps to Wise make sense if the film was government-backed?

It had been a few years since I



Heil Klaatu?

encountered these claims, so I dug into my library to check them over again. Considering them at leisure, armed with my recent viewing of the film, I realised I had the elements for an amusing sceptical romp.

Claims that Hollywood and the US government are partnered for various conspiratorial aims are a repetitive presence both in the culture of paranoia and, more particularly, UFO culture. They range from fragmentary rumours to whole books. My focus shall be on the treatment given *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in two books most focused on seeing a Hollywood/government UFO conspiracy: Michael Mannion, *Project Mindshift: The Re-Education of the American Public Concerning Extraterrestrial Life, 1947-Present* (M. Evans and Company, 1998) and Bruce Rux *Hollywood vs. the Aliens: The Motion Picture Industry's Participation in UFO Disinformation* (Frog, Ltd., 1997)

Claims involving *The Day the Earth Stood Still* are more central in Michael Mannion's book than Bruce Rux's. While Rux sees government influence in virtually every alien film ever made,

Mannion is more selective and chooses *The Day the Earth Stood Still* as a showcase piece of evidence of how a relationship between Hollywood and Washington could be exploited to get information about aliens into the public realm. Mannion begins by stating it remains one of the best flying saucer movies ever made. He correctly observes, "The film has a message unlike the other science fiction films of its day." The technology in it is far in advance of the technology present in the Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers serials.

"Some of the elements of The Day the Earth Stood Still may cause some to wonder how those who made the film were able to present a technology that not only was unlike other films of the era, but also resembles technology that has actually been developed over the past half-century."

Moving into specifics, Mannion observes that when Klaatu prepares to neutralize the earth's electricity,

"He does not push buttons, pull levers, or turn knobs to activate the craft's equipment. Instead, he uses the energy field of his body to turn on and work the energy technology of the spaceship. This is a sophisticated concept, far beyond science fiction movies of the time - or the science of the day, for that matter. How did filmmakers come by inspiration or information so far ahead of their time?" [Mannion's emphasis]

Though Mannion means the question to be rhetorical and unanswerable, the truth of the matter is that Klaatu's mode of control was not beyond the science of

his day. There was a device invented in 1920 that responded to the movement of a person's hands in the air before it without any use of touch. It was a musical instrument. The location of hands relative to a pair of antennae alters capacitance in a pair of high-frequency electronic oscillators and that changes pitch and volume of a sound in an amplifier and speaker. The inventor was a Russian physicist by the name of Leon Theremin. He gained some popularity in Russia and by 1927 was touring Europe and America. He patented it in America, giving manufacturing rights to RCA. Over the next ten years he developed some variations that incorporated dance movement. He also trained people in its use. Some of these students performed in concert settings. Eventually theremins found their way into filmwork and can be found in scores for *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend*.

During the 40s, Bernard Herrmann was an emerging composer and he was hired to score a number of movies in his career - movies that included *Citizen Kane* and *All That Money Can Buy*. In 1951, Herrmann was selected to score *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Herrmann immediately thought of theremins to provide the unearthly electronic tonalities announcing the arrival of Gort. Paradox solved. Klaatu's gestures clearly mimic theremin performances.

This wireless style of prompting the activation of instruments would recur in several films, notably the beamer and shutter controls in *Forbidden Planet* and several episodes in the *Lost in Space* series - "The Derelict", "Invaders from the Fifth Dimension", and Michael Rennie's famous two-parter "The Keeper". Theremins weren't the only source of non-pushbutton interfacing. There is a scene in the film *Things to Come* (1936) where a rebel enters a room and seemingly activates a broadcasting studio by a downward motion of his hand. The motion looks like he is activating a photo-electric cell by breaking a series of light beams. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* most clearly uses this method when Klaatu passes his hand in front of a vertical series of lights to open a door within the saucer. Photo-electric cells came to be called electric eyes and were quite popular in the Fifties, particularly as a way to open doors at grocery and department stores. They were famously

parodied in cartoons, notably *Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century*, (1953) where huge eyes looked down at approaching pedestrian traffic.

Mannion continues his argument by observing the resuscitation of Klaatu at the climax involves "an advanced alien energy medicine machine" utilising ever-increasing levels of radiation head-to toe. This seems to Mannion to be like what is happening now "at the threshold of functional energy medicine". People are already readily resuscitated after heart stoppage in mechanistic medicine. Zero-point technology "will yield equally astonishing results". He proposes that MJ-12 prevailed upon filmmakers to leak this information.

There are problems with this notion on several levels. First, Mannion's description of the resurrection scene is quite odd. While there is some illumination from underneath the body at the beginning, it is rather subtle and there is nothing in the scene to indicate it is supposed to represent radiation. It's not like a blazing light engulfs the body. What does engulf the scene is a noise. There is a loud pulsing drone that rises in intensity. The Patricia Neal character - Helen Benson - covers her ears in clear discomfort. And it is also notable that there is a plate and coil in the region of the head. It suggests the resuscitation procedure involves the brain.

Second, the procedure in the film does not truly resemble any of the present resuscitative procedures developed in medicine in the past half century. It is not even clear it resembles any of the procedures performed by aliens in the UFO literature. Mannion does not cite any specific cases and the cases that occur to me seem merely similar, not exact.

Third, if this procedure was given by MJ-12; it was not given at the beginning of the writing process. The shooting script of 21 February 1951, penned by Edmund North, contains a significantly different description of the resurrection. Gort lays Klaatu on a long counter then fiddles with some knobs, switches, and dials - the wireless innovation is also absent from this script - and then attaches strange-looking electrodes to Klaatu's wrists and ankles. "From a socket in the wall he pulls a strange-looking hypodermic needle on the end of a cord or tube and gives Klaatu a shot in the arm." Gort fiddles with the dials again and there are electrical

cracklings and sputterings. Suddenly he flips a switch and all sound ceases. Gort removes the electrodes. Klaatu's eyelids flutter and he is conscious. The questions of if he was dead and if they have the power of life over death are unchanged from the final form, but Klaatu's explanation is slightly longer. While that power is only had by the Great Spirit, they "can restimulate life for a limited time. It's a refinement of scientific principles known to your own people." [scenes 316, 319, 321-2 on the script archived on the DVD]

Actually, it is more properly regarded as a refinement of the scene in the Boris Karloff horror classic *Frankenstein* (1931) where electricity is used to animate a stitched together corpse. Why else the electrodes and electrical crackling? This resurrection went through another revision before filming, obviously, but this revision actually jumps back to the original 1940 story by Harry Bates.

In that story, the murdered Klaatu is recreated using sound recordings done just before death. The literary justification is that sounds are unique to each living being, thus if you have the soundprint you can create the being that made it. However, these recreations only last a few minutes. While the film cannily omits this justification - people would surely balk at the absurd reasoning used in Harry Bates's work - it retains resonance by having the temporary resurrection accompanied by an extreme sound. As the Bates story existed seven years before the alleged establishment of MJ-12 (24 September 1947; according to lore - Friedman & Berliner, p. 64) any potential link of the precise procedure seen in the final film to MJ-12 is severed.

Fourth, even if we blindly accepted Mannion's interpretation of the scene as demonstrating radiation being used as a resuscitative technique, this is not a dramatic departure from cultural mythology of the era. Cranks had touted remarkable curative, even aphrodisiacal, properties for radium in the 1930s. Some had even proposed the existence of radiations that were the essence of life energies, notably mitogenetic radiation and Wilhelm Reich's orgone energy. Not long after Hiroshima, there was a campaign to show "The Sunny Side of the Atom" which showed people who were able to walk due to the use of radioactive isotopes. Infamously, one advertisement

showed a paraplegic up from his wheelchair with a mushroom cloud superimposed. (Boyer, 1985 & Weart, 1988)

Mannion concludes his argument by speculating,

"Is it possible that the makers of The Day the Earth Stood Still were given this information, either officially or unofficially, by people with knowledge of the technology of advanced alien civilizations? In any case, this film shaped public perception of intelligently extraterrestrial life in the 1950s and, through its availability on videotape, continues to exert its influence today. (It is interesting to note that, as this book was being written, The Day the Earth Stood Still was featured in the "Employee Picks" section of Channel Video on Manhattan's Upper west Side, indicating that a new generation holds the film in high regard nearly fifty years after its release.)

What is curious is why this should be a subject of speculation at this late date. People have repeatedly done retrospectives on *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in film magazines since the 1950s. Virtually everyone of consequence connected with the film has been re-interviewed. Shouldn't Mannion be able to quote testimony proving government involvement from any of these interviews? Did he even look? Why has neither screenwriter Edmund North or director Robert Wise spoken of governmental involvement especially as they seem entirely open with virtually the whole of the story of the creation of the



film, even bringing attention to minor faults noticeable only to themselves because they know the tricks used. Wise admits to being a UFO believer, so why would he deprive himself of the pride of being able to say the government regarded him as helping their aims? Instead, he expresses his annoyance with the military for refusing to lend him the few tanks and jeeps he needed.

* * * * *

The Day the Earth Stood Still occupies a smaller role in Bruce Rux's conspiracy theorising than Michael Mannion's, but Rux makes more aggressive claims.

"20th Century Fox's The Day the Earth Stood Still, [contained] Top Secret realities that would not be discovered until many years later. [Along with The Thing] both of these movies were drastically changed from their original source materials due to tampering on the executive level by Intelligence-connected men, and changed in accord with legitimate secret UFO facts" (Rux, p. 65)

Rux phrases it to sound like this is a fact, but WHO were these Intelligence-connected men? Rux never says. The claims for tampering are also unsourced. There were script changes, but Rux forgets to show how it could be the work of anyone other than Ed North or Robert Wise. Rux escalates his claims;

"most remarkable about the film in terms of this study are the facts we can see it presenting that were not publicly available in 1951 - nor were they in the short story on which the film is based. It is perhaps also of note that screenwriter Edmund North co-wrote the militarily patriotic Patton and the later Meteor, a cosmological collision story not as fictionally removed as it may once have appeared (based on an actual 1968 MIT-proposed planetary defence system called "Project Icarus"), and that director Robert Wise is a UFO believer. Could someone in Hollywood have had an inside track? Or either knowingly or unknowingly, been in connection with with someone who did?

There is no question that producer Darryl Zanuck was considered unlikely to have chosen The Day the Earth Stood Still

for a project. It was a low-budget picture, surprising as that seems today upon viewing its superb craftsmanship, and science fiction was far too new a genre to attract anyone's attention on its own merits."

While Rux notes that Ed North was militarily patriotic, doesn't the fact that the Army refused to provide army equipment suggest this inside-track had little consequence? The paradox should have been obvious to Rux for, later in the book (Rux, p. 516) he has occasion to see the Army's refusal to provide equipment. There he laconically accounts for it by stating the Intelligence community's educational campaign "is not always in accord with the military." Wise, on the DVD, observed that Zanuck bankrolled the film for basically capitalistic reasons.

"Bottom Line was Darryl just thought it was a damned good piece of entertainment and that's what he was interested in. He wasn't concerned about the politics and policy in it. He thought it would make a good film, an interesting film. And away we go"

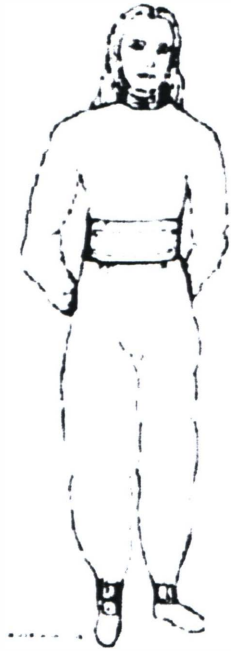
Zanuck's judgment proved correct. We must add that the risk was not trivial for Zanuck for the film was not truly low budget. It was an A-budget production costing \$960,000. (Rubin, p. 22) For the Fifties, this was a pretty big chunk of change to throw away on what Rux wants us to believe is surreptitiously intended as an educational film. Rux continues,

"The Day the Earth Stood Still has so many coincidences with actual UFO facts that the question is unavoidable, especially given the year it was made. A classic flying saucer, bearing a human being and a robot - and the human being initially appears dressed in identical fashion to what was recognized for well over another decade as being a standard UFO occupant look - arrives from an unstated planet that is most probably Mars, which is even directly hinted at."

Rux gives no details on what he thinks the "standard UFO occupant look" constitutes. I may be able to fill in the blanks here, but there are problems. Alice K. Wells did a drawing of the Venusian she saw, through binoculars, visiting George Adamski during a November 20,



The Day the Earth Stood Still



Alice Wells sketch

1952 desert encounter. It was published in the 1953 book by Desmond Leslie.

Both display a loose one-piece snow-suit with a cummerbund around the middle, set slightly high, and bound close around the feet and neck. Adamski called them one-piece ski-trousers, and emphasized their inappropriateness in the desert environment. It lacked zippers, buttons, buckles, fasteners, pockets and seams. There were also no ornaments like wristwatches or necklaces. The primary disparity is an absence of bulging elbows to the suit of Adamski's Venusian. It also needs to said that Klaatu sports a haircut normal to earthly diplomats and businessmen. Adamski's Venusians had long, flowing hair more appropriate to a beautiful woman. (Leslie & Adamski, pp. 196, 209) Though these are not trivial differences, the look of the suits still seems close enough to regard them as probably related. If accepted, however, the educational value is dubious, since the Adamski case is widely doubted to be an authentic alien encounter not least because Venus is a hellish world no scientist believes could be a home to any form of life. For other doubts, consult Moseley and Stupple.

The other best match occurs during the 1973 Humanoid Wave. A lady driving Interstate 75 near Ashburn, Georgia encountered a small metallic man whose head moved as if programmed by a robot.

(Webb, p. 13: October 19, 1973)

The match is compelling in this instance because of similar rectangular eye-slits in a globular helmet on top of a loose-fitting suit that has the bulging elbows. While the presence of a relationship seems probable, the idea that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was intended to prepare the populace for this particular encounter, an obscurity placed 22 years after the film and well south of Washington, D.C., needless to say sounds dubious. Perhaps I'm sounding tongue-in-cheek there, but the stronger point carried within the observation is that no humanoid case in the intervening two decades honestly bears close comparison to Klaatu's appearance. It is easier to

believe these two cases were 'inspired' by the film, than that the film prepared the public for humanoids that so rarely match the film with accuracy. Returning to Rux's claims:

Its occupant is concerned with our military, and threatens force to keep us in line, much as actual UFOs have monitored our atomic developments and sabotaged our military bases.

The notion that aliens were monitoring military bases and atomic experimentation was present in Keyhoe's writings from 1950 and can even be found in Project Sign's papers. That feature of the UFO mythos was widely known before North

put pen to paper. So that is hardly prophetic. Next, Rux claims,

"Failing to achieve direct contact, the alien visitor goes underground and gets to know the locals on a one-to-one basis, which appears to be a motivation for the UFO abductions that have been going on since at least 1957 (and probably a great deal longer) two actual abductions (performed by a robot, no less) even occur in the movie, one of them including medical procedures performed on the abductee by the robot. Who would have known about these things in 1951? More lucky guesses? Like The Thing? Are these movies isolated incidents, or are there other examples?" (Rux, pp. 183-4)

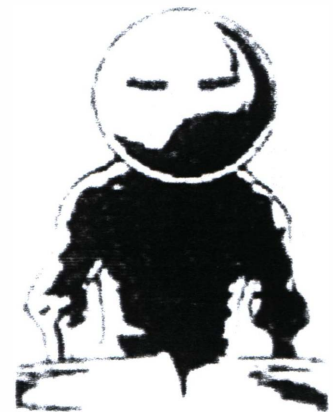
Here we have problems of the very worst sort. The person who has the operation is Klaatu. He is not abducted by the robot. Klaatu's body - he's dead - is rescued from jail. He is the robot's companion and an alien, so it is sublimely strange to say there are two abductions here. The Patricia Neal character is taken up by the robot and carried into the ship and held there while he retrieves Klaatu, probably for her own protection.

There are no notable similarities to later UFO abductions. Certainly we see no paralysing mindscan by black eyes or the harvesting of sexual essences. Gort has to dissolve a wall with a ray to get at Klaatu. He does not pass through it like a ghost as modern aliens do. Neither does Klaatu ever magically teleport through a door or wall. He opens them via a doorknob or activates a sliding panel by passing a hand in front of detectors.

Most medical operations aboard UFOs are not blatantly done by robots. The



The Day the Earth Stood Still
(1951)



Ashburn, Georgia; 1973

robot in the Pascagoula case may be an implicit allusion on Rux's part, but as a later ancestor of Gort, the resemblance does not impress. Worse, though, Rux may have forgotten that the robot was a feature of the original Bates story of 1940. And, in that story, the robot performs numerous experiments involving sound, not exactly typical stuff in present-day abductions.

The idea that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* displayed "accurately related UFO facts" (Rux, p. 69.) is hard to sustain when considering things at anything more than the most superficial level. And it is very striking how few observations Rux offers given his belief that "many coincidences" have been found by ufologists. He is very short on specific details, specific cases, and he gives no references to any discussions by UFO buffs about the "legitimate secret UFO facts" exposed by the film (Rux, p. 65). I'm not saying these discussions don't exist, but I have to doubt they are worth digging up if neither Mannion or Rux could pull together better evidence than this nonsense to put into their books.

I feel the treatment of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in Mannion and Rux is fairly described as symptomatic. The way they deal with this film classic is not appreciably different in quality or style than the way they deal with other films supposedly proving a UFO conspiracy exists linking Hollywood to clandestine Government groups. They are amazingly lazy; often failing to verify whether they have described the films accurately, and often comically vague about the material in the UFO literature allegedly paralleled by the films.

Ultimately, the arguments are too lightweight to balance against the heavier doubts. Hollywood would dish against the government as readily as Wise did against the army. How many screenwriters have ever stayed quiet when film directors and producers and board executives changed their stories? They always seem willing to discuss the sources of their stories. And, if the government did want to prepare the public, there are better ways to do it than works of fiction.

As I exit, stage left, I offer one final opinion. Doing things by committee and government edict is not going to get you a quality film with the stature of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. It was WAY too good to be government issue.



A closer view showing the suit's cummerbund with better definition

Sources:

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Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, University of North Carolina, 1985, pp. 119-20, 156, 299-300.

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Bart Hopkin, *Gravikords, Whirlies & Pyrophones*, Ellipse Arts, 1998, pp. 54-8.

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James Moseley's Special Adamski expose issue, *Saucer News* #27, (October 1957).

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David Stuppel, "The Man Who Walked with Venusians" *Fate* 32, #1; January 1979, pp. 30-9.

Spencer Weart, *Nuclear Fear - A History*, Harvard University, 1988, pp. 49-50

Tom Weaver, "Years After Stillness" *Starlog*, #211, February 1995, pp. 24-7.

David Webb, 1973 - *Year of the Humanoid: An Analysis of the Fall 1973 UFO/Humanoid Wave*, David Webb, 1974, p. 13.

On the DVD commentary Robert Wise's precise comments were: "Interesting thing about - coming up, you're going to see some - All this equipment is not the real army. When you want some help with some of the personnel of the armed services, you have to submit a script to them. Well, they turned us down on this. We didn't need much from them, but we thought we'd get some jeeps and tanks from them. And I guess they didn't like the message." He indicates Twentieth Century Fox had a good lobbyist and "...he went over to the National Guard with Washington and they had no problem with it. And so all the equipment you see in the picture are all from the National Guard outside of Washington.

EDITORIAL

On the UFO UpDates mailing list last year, there was an argument about whether or not the notorious Trindade UFO photographs were genuine or were faked. Mexican UFO researcher Luis Ruiz Noguez had written a long article about the case, which Brad Sparks not only condemned as nonsense, but wrote: "So far he has successfully hidden behind the Spanish language so that English language analysts generally remain unaware of these scientifically absurd claims and thus haven't taken them apart."

It thus occurred to me that if we had interesting items available in both languages, side by side, then everyone would be happy, so in this issue I present a short article in Spanish, together with my attempt at a translation. I am grateful to Diego Zúñiga for permission to publish it and for suggesting some corrections to the translation. However, I am solely responsible for any errors.

EL DESMADRE DE LOS UFÓLOGOS POR PERRO DEL PARQUE FORESTAL

UFOLOGISTS GO WILD ABOUT A DOG IN THE PARQUE FORESTAL

Diego Zúñiga (1)

Translation by John Harney (2)



Una verdadera lucha entre ufólogos se vio en la televisión, especialmente la matinal, ésa que tiene tiempo para dedicar a estas cosas, con motivo de la aparición de una fotografía donde, supuestamente, era posible ver con claridad la presencia de un "ente", eufemismo con el que los crédulos cazadores de marcianos intentaban escudarse y así evitar decir lo que querían decir: extraterrestre.

La disputa comenzó entre los diferentes grupos que intentan, sin éxito, sobresalir como los gurúes de los alienígenas y ocupar el espacio que AION dejó vacante luego de la escasa participación televisiva que ha mostrado Rodrigo Fuenzalida en el último tiempo. La imagen aparentemente primero llegó a manos del IIEE (Instituto de Investigación y Estudios Exobiológicos), pero los primeros en saltar desesperados en busca de la prensa para llamar la atención fueron los personajes reunidos en Cifae (Corporación de Investigación de Fenómenos Aéreos), un grupo que pretende generar turismo a través del engaño de los OVNIS y que aprovechó, de paso, de promocionar su increíble premio a una diputada (¡!) por su ayuda a la investigación OVNI (ver Noticias).

Así fue como se dio a conocer la historia de la imagen. El ingeniero civil Germán Pereira, aficionado a la fotografía oriundo de Concepción y que se encuentra por motivos laborales en Santiago desde hace poco más de un año, se dirigió al Parque Forestal el 10 de mayo de 2004, con el objeto de retratar algunas escenas que le parecieran interesantes. Una de ellas fue el patrullaje que realizaban unos carabineros a caballo, instantánea que dice haber tomado a las 17.40 horas desde la esquina de José Miguel de la Barra y Avenida Cardenal Caro, frente al Museo de Bellas Artes, mirando hacia la cordillera.

Al final obtuvo unas diez tomas con su cámara Kodak DX6490, que descargó en su computador al día siguiente, momento en el que descubrió la curiosa instantánea. En ella usó el zoom óptico de la cámara de 10x. Todos estos datos aparecieron publicados -y están hasta el momento de redactar esta nota- en la página de Cifae. Sobre esa base, el principal referente del grupo, Eric Martínez, se paseó por distintos programas televisivos, mostrando toda su sabiduría sobre el tema.

En ellos, luego de exhibir análisis tan importantes como la confirmación de que la foto era real por parte de Kodak

A real fight between ufologists was seen on television, especially on the morning programmes, which is the time of day dedicated to such things. This was occasioned by the appearance of a photograph in which, allegedly, it was possible to see clearly the presence of an "entity", a euphemism which the credulous alien hunters use to avoid stating explicitly what they want to say: extraterrestrial.

The dispute started between the different groups which try, unsuccessfully, to become prominent like the alien "experts", and to occupy the space left vacant by AION [Chilean Ufological Investigation Group] after the small amount of television time given to Rodrigo Fuenzalida recently. The image apparently first arrived in the hands of the IIEE (Institute for Investigation and Exobiological Studies) but the first to desperately seek the attention of the press were the characters meeting in Cifae (Association for the Investigation of Aerial Phenomena), a group which tries to generate tourism by way of UFO deceptions, and which took advantage of the incident to promote its incredible prize awarded to a Deputy (!) for her help in UFO investigation. (3)

This is how the story of the image was made known. Civil engineer Germán Pereira, a photography enthusiast and a native of Concepción and, for work reasons, living in Santiago for a little more than a year, went to the Parque Forestal on 10 May 2004, to take pictures of anything he found interesting. One of these was a patrol of mounted police, a photograph of which was said to have been taken at 17:40 hours from the corner of José Miguel de la Barra and Avenida Cardenal Caro, in front of the Museo de Bellas Artes looking [east] towards the mountains.

He eventually took about ten photographs with his Kodak DX6490 camera which he downloaded to his computer the following day, when he discovered a curious snapshot. In this he had used the camera's 10x optical zoom. All this information was published - and was until writing this note - on the Cifae web site. On this basis, the main spokesman for the group, Eric Martínez, went from one television programme to another revealing all his wisdom on the subject. (4)

In these programmes, after showing important analyses confirming that the photo was real according to Kodak (which signifies nothing except that the photo had been

(lo que en rigor no significa nada, salvo que la foto fue efectivamente tomada así como se muestra), Martínez expuso su realidad como ufólogo cuando en el matinal de TVN "Buenos días a todos" confesó que aunque "quiero ser serio y no quiero especular, menos con los medios" y "me pidieron que no lo dijera", a su juicio uno de los caballos que aparecen en la fotografía se "siente atraído" hacia el "ser" (para no decir extraterrestre) y por eso el equino se inclina levemente hacia el lado en que estaría el marciano paseandero.

Salvo la siempre racional presencia de Mauricio Bustamante, periodista del noticiero de TVN, el resto de las personas dedicadas a hablar sobre el tema simplemente mostraron toda su falta de criterio, sentido común y rigor ya no científico, sino meramente periodístico, que es lo que se puede pedir a unos periodistas, hayan estudiado donde hayan estudiado. Por eso Martínez, en su salsa, contó como exclusiva que iban a estar el viernes 11 de junio en el Parque Forestal para hacer mediciones y estar en el lugar de los hechos, pero que no iba a dar más indicaciones porque "no queremos que se nos llene de gente". Aún así dijo que se reunirían en la mañana, frente al Museo de Bellas Artes...

Luego, jugando al misterio, Martínez contó que tenían en su poder una foto donde aparece "una luz extraña a nivel del suelo", de la que hablarían más adelante (cosa que nunca sucedió), lo que para él era señal inequívoca de que el ET tenía que haber llegado en una nave, porque si no cómo. En TV también tuvo cabida el grupo CIO (Corporación para la Investigación OVNI), que intentó restarle méritos a su rival tratando de explicar la fotografía a través de rebuscadas argucias, como que la zona del destello de luces que se ve en la foto no tenía píxeles (falso) o que en un sector determinado del área de los árboles podía verse un rostro, lo que confirmaba que todo era resultado de la imaginación humana (falso; no se ve ningún rostro, ni siquiera forzando la mirada).

Esto deja como moraleja que, si se quiere ser escéptico o criticar algo, hay que tener argumentos valederos y no vagas nociones sobre un tema. Tampoco parece aceptable la invención de situaciones, pues se comete una equivocación que termina por perjudicar a los que realmente tiene cómo criticar o fundamentar una oposición a las ideas absurdas que nos rodean diariamente.

Un mejor análisis fue el que hizo el también creyente grupo IIEE, sucursal Chile. Sin tanta cobertura mediática como la sensacional noticia del paseante de otro mundo, pudo determinar que en la imagen posiblemente aparecía un perro, y no un "ente" o un espíritu o cualquiera de las otras locuras que difundieron los ufólogos menos rigurosos, quienes llegaron a mencionar a unos supuestos "kappas", mensajeros del dios del río en Japón... Aún así, Ramón Navia-Osorio, mandamás del IIEE en España, se mostró partidario de la hipótesis de un montaje, idea que desde ya declaramos no compartir. Ya veremos por qué.

Como curiosidad, un desconocido grupo llamado EFA (Estudios de Fenómenos Anómalos) quiso obtener su parte del botín y se presentó el 11 de junio a indagar en el Parque Forestal. Luis Ojeda, uno de los dos miembros del grupo, aseguró haber visto "criaturas parecidas" al "ET" del parque y

taken as described), Martínez showed what sort of a ufologist he was on the morning TVN programme "Buenos días a todos" ("Good morning everybody") when he confessed that although "I want to be serious and I don't want to speculate, not with the media" and "They asked me not to talk about it", in his opinion one of the horses which appears in the photograph "felt attracted" towards the "being" (not said to be extraterrestrial) and this caused the horse to incline slightly towards the side where the alien was passing.

Apart from the always rational presence of Mauricio Bustamante, TVN news reporter, the rest of them devoted themselves to showing all their lack of judgement, common sense and not scientific rigour, but journalistic, what can be asked by journalists, having studied where they have studied. Because of this, Martínez, in his element, said that he had the exclusive right to be in the Parque Forestal on 11 June to take measurements and to establish the facts, but that he was not going to give any more instructions because "we don't want it to be full of people". Even so he said that they would meet in the morning, in front of the Museo de Bellas Artes . . .

Later, acting mysteriously, Martínez said that he had in his possession a photo which showed "a strange light at ground level", of which he would say more later (this never happened), a thing which he said was an unequivocal sign that the ET had arrived in a craft: if not how else would it arrive? There was also television time for the group CIO (Association for UFO Investigation), which tried to take the credit away from its rival by using over-elaborate, cunning arguments, saying that an area of sparkling lights seen in the photograph did not have pixels (false), or that in a section of the area of the trees a face could be seen, which confirmed that everything was the result of human imagination (false; nothing is seen, even when trying to see it).

The moral of this is that if one wants to be sceptical or to criticise something, one should have valid arguments and some precise knowledge of the subject. It is not acceptable, either, to invent situations because mistakes are made so that one ends up making it difficult to criticise or to oppose the absurd ideas that surround us daily.

A better analysis was one done by the Chilean branch of the believers' group IIEE. Without as much media coverage as for the sensational news of a stroller from another world, the group was able to determine that it could possibly be the image of a dog, and not an "entity", or a spirit or any one of the other mad ideas that spread among the less rigorous ufologists, some of them going as far as to mention the so-called "kappas", messengers of the God of the River in Japan . . . Even so, Ramón Navia-Osorio, big shot of the IIEE in Spain, was partial to the hypothesis of a montage, an idea we have already declared we do not share. We will soon see why.

Curiously enough, an unknown group called EFA (Studies of Anomalous Phenomena) wanted to obtain some of the booty and appeared on 11 June to investigate in the

sostuvo que "estas entidades han estado por muchísimo tiempo compartiendo nuestro medio ambiente", según lo publicado en *Las Últimas Noticias* del sábado 12 de junio.

Lo cierto es que desde un principio quienes elaboramos este pasquín optamos por la explicación de la deformación de la imagen. Es decir, en la foto -seguramente real, es decir tomada honestamente por el fotógrafo- aparece algo, con mucha probabilidad un perro, que se distorsionó debido a que la foto está movida, y por lo tanto el animal también sale movido. De esta manera, se genera una figura que es interpretada por las mentes más febriles como un ET, reflejando a las claras la influencia que ha tenido la subcultura alienígena en todas las personas. Porque hay que estar muy sumido en la creencia ET para ver un alien en la fotografía. Es una cosa cultural, para decirlo en términos sencillos.

Lo que sucede acá es algo muy parecido a lo que se conoce como "simulacrum", que es definido por el CSICOP <<http://www.csicop.org>> como "el efecto que lleva a la gente a creer que está viendo una cara en el nudo de un árbol o un animal en la forma de las nubes. El cerebro humano está buscando constantemente modelos de significancia visual. Es una habilidad de supervivencia. Desgraciadamente esto nos lleva a creer que estamos viendo 'algo' en una situación meramente azarosa".

En este caso ha sucedido eso. Creemos estar viendo un ser "macrocéfalo", como dijeron los ufólogos con su gracioso metalenguaje, cuando en realidad sólo era una imagen distorsionada de un perro. Lo único malo es que fue puesta en manos de ufólogos y bueno, pasó lo que pasó.

PS: Si no le gustó nuestra explicación, entonces le comentamos que en la imagen, al final del camino de tierra, se ven unos monjes misteriosos. Con harta imaginación, eso sí. La foto está llena de cosas raras, como verá. Y ojo con la imagen de internet que se muestra, pues refleja cuán objetivos son los ufólogos: "nosotros no hemos dicho que sea un ET", sostienen. Cómo no.

Parque Forestal. Luis Ojeda, one of the two members of the group, said that he had seen "creatures like" the "ET" in the park and he maintained that "these entities have been sharing our environment for a long time", according to what was published in *Las Últimas Noticias* on Saturday 12 June.

What is certain is that from a principle we elaborated in this rag [*La Nave de los Locos*] we chose the explanation of distortion of the image. That is to say, in the photo - surely genuine, truthfully taken as described by the photographer - appears something, probably a dog, which is distorted because the camera has moved, so the animal also seems to move the same amount. In this way, a figure is generated which is interpreted by the most febrile minds as an ET, clearly reflecting the influence the ET subculture has had on everybody. Because of being so familiar with the belief in ETs we see an alien in the photograph. It's a cultural thing, to put it in simple terms.

What is happening here is something very similar to what is known as a "simulacrum", which is defined by CSICOP <<http://www.csicop.org>> as "the effect which makes people think they are seeing a face in the knot of a tree or an animal in the shape of clouds. The human brain is constantly looking for models of visual significance. It is a survival ability. Unfortunately this makes us think that we are just seeing something hazardous."

In this case that has happened. We believe we are seeing a "macrocephalous" being, said the ufologists with their elegant metalanguage, when in fact it was only the distorted image of a dog. The only bad thing was that it got into the hands of ufologists and well, what happened, happened.

PS: For those who don't like our explanation, we tell them that, in the image, at the end of the dirt road, some mysterious monks can be seen. With a lot of imagination, it is so. The photo is full of rare things, as they will see. And look at what is said about the image on the Internet, for it shows how objective the ufologists are: "We have not said that it is an ET", they claim. Of course.

Editor's notes

1. Diego Zúñiga edits the magazine *La Nave de los Locos*, Santiago, Chile, in which this article was published in No. 28, July 2004. e-mail: editor@lanavedeloslocos.cl, web site: <http://www.lanavedeloslocos.cl> 2. See Editorial. 3. Deputy Lily Pérez San Martín, a member of the Chilean National Congress. For further details see http://www.elcajon.cl/ovniaventura/premio_2004.htm 4. CIFA has recently published the results of improving the photograph, mainly by correcting for the camera movement while it was being taken. In the corrected image the strange being looks remarkably like a dog. See "Restauración de la imagen del Parque Forestal" at http://www.ovniaventura.com/foto_parque.htm

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